

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are now pending in the application. Of these pending claims, Claims 1-9 and 11-20 stand rejected, and Claim 10 is objected to. Claims 9, 10 and 16 have been cancelled. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

The Examiner states that Claim 10 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected claim and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicant has amended Claims 1, 14 and 18 to include the allowable subject matter of Claim 10. Therefore, Claims 1-9 and 11-20 should now be in condition for allowance.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 20 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Applicant has amended Claim 20 to overcome this informality. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102 & 103

Claims 1-3, 9 and 11-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Atkinson (U.S. Pat. No. 4,434,810; hereinafter "Atkinson"). Claims 5-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Atkinson. Claim 4 stands rejected as being unpatentable over Atkinson in view of Izydorek et al. (U.S. Pat.

No. 4,434,810; hereinafter "Izydorek"). Claims 1 and 9 are alternatively rejected as being unpatentable over Kallenbach (U.S. Pat. No. 5,105,848; hereinafter "Kallenbach") in view of Atkinson. Claims 14-17 stand rejected as being unpatentable over Davison (U.S. Pat. No. 5,062,447; hereinafter "Davison") in view of Atkinson. Claims 18-20 stand rejected as being unpatentable over Tupper (U.S. Patent No. 4,165,816; hereinafter "Tupper") in view of Atkinson. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

At the outset, Applicant notes that independent Claim 1 has been amended to now include:

an elongated body coupled to an outer surface of the flexible member; and

a retaining ring coupled to the elongated body, the retaining ring configured to retain the flexible member within the elongated body.

Independent Claim 14 has been amended to also include:

a retaining ring coupled to the elongated body, the retaining ring configured to retain the flexible member within the elongated body.

In addition, independent Claim 18 has been amended to include:

providing a retaining ring and an elongated body; and

coupling the flexible member to an elongated body with the retaining ring, the retaining ring configured to retain the flexible member within the elongated body.

Applicant respectfully submits that as independent Claims 1, 14 and 18 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of Claim 10, independent Claims 1, 14 and 18 are patentable over Atkinson, Izydorek, Kallenbach, Davison, and Tupper, either alone or in combination.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claims 1, 14 and 18 are in condition for allowance. In addition, as Claims 2-8, 11-13, 15-17, 19 and 20 each depend from either independent Claims 1, 14 or 18, Applicant respectfully submits that these claims are also patentable and in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of these rejections are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

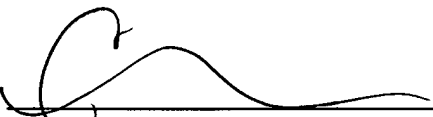
Respectfully submitted,

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